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CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON A COALITION OF RESOURCES FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Note by the UNCTAD secretariat

Pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/73 and General Assembly resolution 48/179, the Consultative Meeting on a Coalition of Resources for Science and Technology for Development was convened from 1 to 2 December in New York. The report of the meeting is attached to this note.

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COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT

Second Session

REPORT

Consultative Meeting on a Coalition of Resources for Science and Technology for Development

NEW YORK, 1 - 2 DECEMBER 1994

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I. Introduction

The Consultative Meeting on a Coalition of Resources for Science and Technology for Development was convened on 1 December, 1994 at 10:00 a.m. in the Trusteeship Council. Mr. Sergio de Abreu e Lima Florêncio, Minister of the Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations acted as Chairman of the meeting. The meeting followed the Agenda outlined in Annex I. The participants, as listed in Annex II, represented a range of organizations, including bilateral donors, multilateral organizations, private foundations, funding and scientific organizations. The Consultative Meeting held three sessions, concluding its work on 2 December.

The Consultative Meeting was convened in response to ECOSOC resolution 1993/73, and General Assembly resolution 48/179, which welcomed the initiative for a consultative meeting to consider ways and means for organizing a coalition of resources and urged that national efforts and international development cooperation, be intensified and strengthened towards endogenous capacity-building in science and technology in the developing countries.

The Consultative Meeting was opened with introductory remarks by Mr. Nitin Desai, the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. He explained that the consultative meeting was intended as an exchange of ideas to crystallize the notion of a "coalition of resources". He noted the importance of having a clear concept of science and technology as basic to mobilizing and coordinating resources. In this regard, a mission-specific approach is particularly helpful. The efforts at the global level should be of a catalytic nature but the greater part of capacity building in science and technology has to take place at the national level. Science and technology is embedded in sectoral activities. Coordination must thus be built around specific themes rather than on science and technology in general. He stressed the need to be eclectic and elastic in the choice of partners in promoting science and technology both at the national and international levels in a situation of shrinking resources. Transition to sustainable development requires above all a systematic approach to science and technology. He looked forward to the ideas that would emerge from meeting and said they would be actively pursued and followed-up.

The list of documentation, along with a discussion paper, to be considered by the meeting was reviewed by the secretariat. The list of documentation is contained in Annex III.

It was emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to generate ideas and that the concept of a coalition of resources was not limited to finances, but included human and intellectual resources and logistic services that might be available to assist developing countries.

II. Summary of Presentations

To facilitate a discussion of possible models for coordination of science and technology, presentations of five existing examples of coordination at the national and international level were made. These ranged from rather informal, collegial means of coordination such as the "like-minded donors" approach to more structured mechanisms such as "Bellanet" which is just being initiated. All of these examples provided useful elements that could be considered in the context of devising a mechanism for coordinating and making more effective use of existing resources for science and technology.

A. "Like-Minded Donors"

Mr. George Waardenburg, Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, explained the dynamics of this group which consists of: IDRC (Canada), DANIDA (Denmark), SAREC (Sweden), MNFA/NORAD (Norway) and DGIS (The Netherlands). "Like mindedness' was characterized as: (1) looking at development from an international view point, (2) recognition that it is essential to listen to developing countries, (3) the straightforward implementation of ideas into practice, and (4) the recognition of the importance and complexity of science and technology issues. The collaboration between "like minded donors" was likely to result in: a better understanding for the needs of developing countries, the encouragement and stimulation of colleagues and the adjustments of strategic policies and cooperation at the operational level.

B. Bellanet

Mr. John Hardie, International Development Research Center (IDRC), Canada. Bellanet is to be a global forum for sustainable development research and capacity development. Its objectives are to: (1) improve donor performance in programme planning, implementation and evaluation, through better sharing of ideas, information and experience; (2) to promote and achieve more concerted efforts and financial collaboration; and, (3) improve cost-effectiveness, impact and relevance of both individual agencies and the overall donor community, by improved synergy and/or more effective division of labour. The change of title from "Donornet" to "Bellanet" reflects the intention to create an inclusive network of donors, development agents and partners in developing countries. A special group of representatives from developing countries will advise the project on the information networking needs of client and recipient communities. The project begins a three-year experimental phase in January 1995.

C. Coordination of Science and Technology Policies in Africa

Mr. Akin Adubifa, Carnegie Corporation of New York noted that coordination in this area is organized through the African Technology Policy Studies Network. The mission of the Network is to improve the quality of technology policy making in sub-Saharan Africa and to strengthen the region's institutional capacity for the management of technological development. This is pursued through the creation of a strong sense of ownership in the countries by encouraging them to set their own research agenda and through peer review of research activities. He noted that the number of donor agencies willing to support the initiative financially was gradually expanding and suggested that a key factor in the success of the network so far is the structure of partnership which involves and allocates responsibilities to donors, researchers, policy makers and programme coordinators.

D. Endogenous Capacity Building at the National Level

Mr. Johann Baumler (UNDP) and Mr. Lutz Baehr (DDSMS) presented the U.N. experience with coordination of science and technology at the national level through Endogenous Capacity Building. There are five existing mechanisms for overall coordination used by UNDP: country programming, round tables, technical assistance assessment schemes, strategic notes and sector reviews. The lessons learned from the pilot programme on Endogenous Capacity Building through National Policy Dialogues include: (1) the need to mobilize external and domestic resources; (2) using a systems approach to capacity building; (3) the ongoing process of national dialogues should be part of any coalition of resources; (4) mechanisms of coordination should be focused on endogenous capacity building.

E. CGIAR

The experience of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) cooperation scheme was presented by Mr. Callie Boucher, World Bank Liaison Office. The Group is a partner in a global agricultural research system which includes: national agricultural research systems (NARS) of developing countries, sixteen international agricultural research centers (IARCs) of the CGIAR and advanced research institutes in both developed and developing countries. The CGIAR plays three roles: (1) to generate research products, both information and materials, which are useful to the farmers in a wide range of developing countries; (2) to provide a bridge with developed country research capacity to focus on the critical problems of developing country agriculture and the environment; and (3) to help build scientific capacity in the national agricultural research systems in developing countries. Three types of mechanisms are used: (a) collaborative research, (b) networks, and (c) consortia. The strengths of this coordination scheme include: its apolitical nature, the use of a technical advisory commission, donor sovereignty and vesting autonomy in each center which sets its own priorities.

III. Topics Discussed

A. Definition and Classification of Science and Technology

The issue of defining science and technology was introduced to better understand what type of projects and programmes might be classified under this rubric given the variety of categories currently used by donor agencies. This is a functional requirement based on the need for information collection and comparative analysis and to help make science and technology efforts more visible. However there is a strategic concern to make science and technology more relevant to specific needs of developing countries. It would be difficult to agree on a coalition of resources for science and technology unless there is clear understanding of what is meant by science and technology in that context.

The participants at the Consultative Meeting were not in a position to define science and technology for the purpose of standardizing the data bases of donor organizations. This would require specialized expertise. The modalities for undertaking such an exercise might best be considered by a small working group under the aegis of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. However, the terms "science and technology," should be demystified, and its scope be understood to include the natural, physical and social sciences. Science and technology are often seen as based on developed country value systems or as something that is excessively intellectual and outside the range of regular citizens. The challenge is to teach people to employ science and technology as tools to transform their daily lives and raise their standards of living, while recognizing at the same time the value of existing local knowledge systems.

Mobilization of national intellectual resources through identification and investment in existing scientific and technological talents in the countries, was considered critical for strengthening the knowledge base in those countries. This is the reasoning behind the approach of some donors who consider endogenous capacity building as a means of empowerment through knowledge. Such efforts extend beyond the traditional training of high level academic specialists and include new initiatives to break down science illiteracy and raise public awareness of the importance of science and technology for development.

Technological innovation alone cannot go far without being accompanied by: (1) the presence of a strong political will at the highest level; (2) the necessary social and organizational innovation; and (3) a receptive cultural base to support technological innovation. Capacity building in this context would also mean building decision making and managerial capabilities.

B. Coordination Arrangements and Mechanisms

Coordination arrangements must be based on user/recipient needs and demands. There was general agreement that greater commonality of action among donors in terms of better focusing and concentrating assistance would be beneficial provided such commonality of action was demand driven, taking into account individual donor mandates. The analogy was made to a sports team where the individual desire to excel has to be harnessed to the team effort in order to win. Both individual excellence and team spirit are essential.

It would not be useful to try to organize a single global coalition of resources for science and technology. There should be multiple coalitions focused around specific themes. Coalitions of resources

or any type of donor coordination mechanism would have to be informal and cooperative in nature and would have to be focused on specific, well defined types of science and technology related themes, sectors, programmes and projects, rather than on science and technology in a generic sense. It is the informality and voluntary nature of the CGIAR experience that was identified as contributing to its success as a coordinating mechanism for funding research activities.

The programmatic framework for a coalition of resources would have to be built on a clear understanding of the focus of such an undertaking. One possible focus would be "building science and research capacity to generate knowledge and technology for development." In this regard, the following four areas could serve as general organizing principles for assistance efforts:

(1) Policy development for promotion of national capacity to provide a policy environment that will foster the use of science and technology for development, including priority setting;

(2) Identification and investment in locally available technical and scientific talent;

(3) Support for national institutions responsible for implementing science and technology programmes; and,

(4) Ensuring sustainable funding

Any one of these elements could be used as a basis for focusing the activities and assistance of a particular donor or agency.

At the national level, coalitions could be based on continuing policy dialogues with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector and the public at the grassroots level. Existing institutions in the countries could play the role of facilitator for these coalitions.

The focus could be placed on programmes directed for instance at: (1) certain themes derived from demand assessment in developing countries; (2) sectors chosen on the basis of similar assessment; (3) specific country studies reviewing the existing science and technology system including the structure for the expression of needs and indication of opportunities for improving the S&T system; (4) inter-country programmes at the regional level, coordinating the research efforts in the constituent countries, like the African Economic Research Consortium.

C. Role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development

The existing coordination schemes for donors in science and technology are organized on an *ad hoc* basis without an umbrella mechanism. The funding of science and technology related activities is largely left to a spontaneous "market" of donors. While these informal networks of donors should be encouraged, there would be a value in having a periodic exchange of experiences among partners of different networks through a political forum such as the CSTD. It would be also worth studying experiences and approaches that have proven successful or that have encountered problems. The CSTD may usefully consider devoting some part of its biennial meeting, or develop an intersessional activity to provide a forum of such interaction with and among donors and other partners.

CSTD may also wish to consider setting up a small task force to examine the possibility of

arriving at clear categories for classifying science and technology activities so as to facilitate the future collection and analysis of data.

The private sector has a potentially important and significant role to play in the development and encouragement of science and technology capacity. Its role should be assessed in more detail with the view to involve them in future interactions among partners of development.

IV. Recommendations

(1) At the international level, there should be multiple coalitions focused around specific themes and common goals amongst donors and recipients. These should be based on voluntary and informal mechanisms that promote the full interaction of both donors and recipients. The feasibility of building science and technology into existing and broader coordination schemes should be considered.

(2) At the national level, coalitions should be based on continuing policy dialogues with a wide range of stakeholders, including the private sector and the public at the grassroots level.

(3) CSTD should provide a forum for exchange of views and interaction among partners of different networks and coordination schemes in the area of science and technology for development. Such forums may be held either as a segment of its biennial sessions or as an intersessional activity.

(4) CSTD may also wish to consider setting up a small task force to examine the necessity for and the possibility of arriving at clear categories for classifying science and technology activities so as to facilitate the future collection and comparative analysis of data.

(5) The private sector has a potentially important and significant role to play in the development and encouragement of science and technology capacity. There is need, however for a more detailed assessment of the actual and potential contribution of the private sector to science and technology and CSTD should be requested to undertake such assessment as part of its work programme.

Annex I Agenda

I. Opening session

Welcome and introductory remarks
by Under-Secretary-General of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development

II. Introduction of the background paper by the Secretariat

III. Review of existing coordination schemes

A. Coordination group among "like-minded donors" for research: presentation by Directorate General for International Cooperation of Netherlands

B. CGIAR cooperation scheme: presentation by the World Bank

C. Bellanet model: presentation by IDRC

D. Coordination on science and technology policies in Africa: presentation by the Carnegie Corporation of New York

E. Coordination in science and technology at the national level through Endogenous Capacity Building approach: presentation by UNDP

IV. Proposals for improved coordination

Annex II List of participants

O. Akin Adubifa
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Salahuddin Ahmad
Islamic Development Bank

Mansour Al-Malik
Ministry of Petroleum, Saudi Arabia

Skrypko Alyaksei
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations

M. J. Finley Austin
U.S. Agency for International Development

Soliman Awaad
Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations

Kwaku Aning
(UNCTAD)

A. M. Aziz
International Labour Organisation ILO, NY

Lutz Bachr
(DDSMS)

Hassan H. Bahlouli
(UNIDO)

Johann Baumler
(UNDP)

Patricia Belmar
Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations

Joseph D. Ben-dak
(UNDP)

Guillermo Bolanos
Central American Bank for Economic Integration

Joao Borges
Secretariat of State, Portugal

Carlston Boucher
World Bank, (Liaison Office-NY)

Alberto Colella
Permanent Mission of Italy to the United Nations

Joao Baptista da Costa
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Angola to the United Nations

Niels Dabelstein
DANIDA/Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark

Dan del Villano
Permanent Mission of Canada to the United Nations

Philippe Delacroix
Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations

Nitin Desai
(DPCSD)

Kong Deyong
Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations

Seydina O. Diop
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Senegal to the United Nations

Jan Dybfest
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway

Lowell Flanders
(DPCSD)

Sergio Augusto de Abreu e Lima Florencio
Permanent Mission of Brazil to the United Nations

Jorge Flores
Permanend Mission of Honduras to the United Nations

Roland Fuchs
ICSU-International Council of Science Unions (START)

Muriel Glasgow
(UNICEF)

Miguel A. Gonzalez
Permanent Mission of Chile to the United Nations

Gilberto Guada Boan
Permanent Mission of Cuba to the United Nations

John Hardie
(IDRC)

Victoria Harris
Permanent Mission of United Kingdom to the United Nations

Niall Holohan
Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations

John Hope
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Fouad Hosny
Permanent Mission of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United Nations

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Science and Technology, Commonwealth Secretariat
Commonwealth Science Council

George Kell
(UNCTAD)

Reinhard Keune
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Dong Wood Kim
Republic of Korea Mission to the United Nations

Irma E. Klein-Loemban Tobing
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Suriname to the United Nations

Masanori Kobayashi
Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations

Adolfo Korn
United Nations (Ref.)

Laura Licchi
(UNCHS)

Bjorn Lundgren
International Foundation for Science (IFS)

R. Mansourian
(WHO)

Manlio Martinez
Comision para el Desarrollo Cientifico y Tecnologico de Centro America y Panama

Hiroko Morita-Lou
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Duncan Pruett
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Susan Raymond
The New York Academy of Sciences

Rainald Roesch
Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations

Oleg Rudenski
Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

Susan Ruffo
United States Mission to the United Nations

Avery Russell
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Christian Schubert
Federal Foreign Office, Germany

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(FAO)

Jorge Werthein
(UNESCO)

Karel Zebrakovsky
Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations

Annex III List of Documents

- Consultative meeting on a coalition of resources for science and technology for development. New York, 1 - 2 December 1994, discussion paper.

- Report of the Secretary-General on Division of labour and coordination within the United Nations system in the field of science and technology (E/1994/70).

- Excerpts from the report of the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1994 (A/49/3), Chapter III, section A. Science and technology for development.

- Excerpts from the report of the Administrator on United Nations Fund for Natural Resources Exploration, United Nations Fund for Science and Technology for Development and Transfer of Technology Through Expatriate Nationals (DP/1994/29).